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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 4751
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3175
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5523
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2365
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0590
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 9317
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 6810
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 1752
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5819
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 7802
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0648
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0985
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002774

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Iran
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. Human Rights

Key stories in the media:

HaQaretz reported that Likud Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu told the

newspaper that Likud is behind him and far-right-winger Moshe Feiglin will soon disappear. The Jerusalem Post reported that the Likud's internal court will meet Thursday to determine whether to demote Feiglin from his current realistic slot on the party's list for the February 10 election to one that could leave him outside the legislature. Channel 2-TV reported Wednesday that a majority of the judges on the court were in favor of moving down Feiglin and advancing candidates elected to regional slots, for technical reasons. If so, Feiglin would move from No. 20 on the list to the 35th slot. HaQaretz (English Ed.) also reported that Secretary Condoleezza Rice dismissed Likud Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu's economic peace plan at a meeting of foreign ministers in Brussels last week, saying that the goal is a two-state solution.

HaQaretz quoted a well-placed American source as saying that earlier this week President-elect Barack Obama's administration will offer Israel a "nuclear umbrella" against the threat of a nuclear attack by Iran. The source, who is close to the new administration, said the U.S. will declare that an attack on Israel by Tehran would result in a devastating U.S. nuclear response against Iran. But HaQaretz reported that America's nuclear guarantee to Israel could also be interpreted as a sign that the U.S. believes Iran will eventually acquire nuclear arms. Maariv reported that a senior IAEA official told the newspaper that within a few months Iran will have enough uranium for a bomb. The official was quoted as saying that the reactor at Natanz is a double-edged sword that can shift from a civilian to a military application within a short time.

Senior Hamas official Mahmoud Zahar was quoted as saying in an interview with Israel Radio that a prisoner swap is possible within a day. Leading media reported that, as Israel's leaders met Wednesday to discuss its military options following increasing numbers of missiles being launched into the western Negev from the Gaza Strip, the government approved transferring 100 million shekels (around \$25 million) to Gaza banks. The media cited opposition to the move by right-wing parties and media. Speaking on Israel Radio, Vice PM Haim Ramon also strongly criticized the idea.

In an interview with The Jerusalem Post, Gen. Keith Dayton, the U.S. Army General who is overseeing the training in Jordan of the PA's National Security Force for the West Bank, praised the new recruits as the "most capable Palestinian security forces that have ever been fielded here," and firmly played down the notion that they might one day come to turn their weapons on Israel. Dayton told the daily that the trainees are taught over and over again that "you are not here to learn how to fight against the Israeli occupation." Their focus, rather, he said, is "totally on the lawless elements within Palestinian society."

Leading media reported that Zeev Braude, the West Bank settler who was caught on film shooting at Palestinians last week, was indicted in Jerusalem's Magistrate's court yesterday. The Magistrate has moved to release Braude with restrictions while the State Prosecutor's Office appealed to the Jerusalem District Court against the release. The appeal will be heard this morning. Braude was released from police custody just hours before the indictment was announced. The indictment came after Braude's release because the presiding judge said a settler -- refused to extend his remand until an appeal was served.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the American Jewish Committee and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations refused to support unequivocally a call by FM Tzipi Livni for all countries who care about Israel and oppose anti-Semitism to boycott the second Durban Conference against Racism, scheduled to be held in April at the UN headquarters in Geneva. On Tuesday, Livni held a conference call with Jewish organizations throughout the world. The participants discussed the FM's statement of November 19, in which she declared that Israel will not participate and will not legitimize the [Durban] review conference, which will be used as a platform for further anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic activity. We call upon the international community not to participate.

Major media reported that yesterday the Counter-Terrorism Bureau issued a travel advisory warning Israelis against traveling to India's Goa region during the end-of-year holiday season. The statement said that the terror threat inside India is concrete and very high.

Israel Hayom reported that yesterday the Knesset's Finance Committee allocated 281 million shekels (around \$72 million) to yeshivas and the territories.

Yediot reported that Labor Party minister Ami Ayalon announced yesterday that he will resign from the government, bowing to his party's demands.

The Jerusalem Post reported that after being used for more than 40 years of faithful service, the Israel Air Force is on the hunt for a replacement for the A-4 Skyhawk attack planes.

Yediot cited an official Interior Minister document stating that African refugees will be relocated to peripheral areas.

Ha'aretz reported that the University of California (UC) will soon allow students to return to studying abroad. The UC system was among scores of American universities that suspended their Israel study-abroad programs in 2002 after the State Department placed Israel on its travel advisory list for safety reasons. Israel remains on the list.

Maariv presented the results of a TNS/Teleseker poll on voting intentions for the Knesset elections:
In brackets: Maariv's December 1 poll):
Likud:31 (33); Kadima:28 (29); Labor Party: 12 (10); Yisrael Beiteinu: 11 (10); Arab parties: 10 (10); Shas:9 (8); National Union Party and National-Religious Party:6 (6); Meretz:5 (7); United Torah Judaism and assimilated: 5 (5); Green Party 3 (2).

1. Iran:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: There is reason to fear that the United States will accept a nuclear Iran for lack of an alternative.... But until this comes about, Israel must give Obama's new policy a chance and let him leave no stone unturned in an attempt to stop the Iranian bomb.

Block Quotes:

"A New Approach to Iran"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (12/11): Q.U.S. President-elect Barack Obama intends to fundamentally change Washington's policy toward Iran. In an interview a few days ago, Obama proposed direct talks with Iran and offered economic incentives for halting its nuclear program. In doing so, Obama reconfirmed his campaign promises to open a dialogue with Iran without preconditions.... Obama's proposal will be an opportunity to open new relations between the United States and Iran after nearly three decades of separation, isolation and rivalry. It is also a recognition of the Bush administration's failure to stop Tehran's nuclear program. Israel, which sees the Iranian nuclear program as its greatest security threat, has an interest in the success of Obama's efforts. The existing sanctions policy has not proved effective.... It is important for Israel not to block [Obama's] way, and for its leaders to refrain from posturing and taking steps that may hinder the American-Iranian dialogue.... There is reason to fear that the United States will accept a nuclear Iran for lack of an alternative, and invest its diplomatic effort into setting new rules of the game in the Middle East and in strengthening deterrence, instead of prevention. But until this comes about, Israel must give Obama's new policy a chance and let him leave no stone unturned in an attempt to stop the Iranian bomb.

2. Mideast:

Summary:

Liberal columnist and anchor Ofer Shelach wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QIsrael failed in handling the Shalit question, a shameful moral and professional failure. This failure negates the right of the state's leader, today and after the elections, to prolong the suffering of Gilad and his family. The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QWith nearly a billion people today starving in Asia and Africa, is it not unconscionable to speak of Qmass famineQ in Gaza?

Block Quotes:

I. "We Failed and We Have to Pay"

Liberal columnist and anchor Ofer Shelach wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/11): QThe new prime minister in Israel will decide that that's it, there is no point in holding the Shalit family in the unbelievable path of agony in which they have been living for the past 900 days. There are no alternatives, no new thoughts, not even a new set of national values, the kind that Ehud Olmert spoke about long ago. We are waiting. In this situation, Gilad must return home.... Israel did not keep its contract with its citizens, and therefore no one has the right to say that he has a national consideration that outweighs the suffering of the Shalit family. When Shalit was taken prisoner, an arrogant and obtuse leadership saw an opportunity for a new order in the Gaza Strip, as a priority far higher than taking efficient action for his release. When it became apparent that an arrangement was slow in coming, there was no permanent team that handled the matter, equipped with instructions with historical backing and a leadership rationale, and armed with knowledge and flexible and original thinking processes.... Israel failed in handling the Shalit question, a shameful moral and professional failure. This failure negates the right of the state's leader, today and after the elections, to prolong the suffering of Gilad and his family. Only a real leader and a system of sterling quality would be entitled to do so, and these are things that we do not have.

II. "Human Rights & Wrongs"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (12/11): Q[Top UN Human Rights official Professor Richard FalkQs] reflections have led him to conclude that Israel is now QslouchingQ toward another Holocaust. But this time, it is the Jews who may be dreaming of carrying out the genocide. Falk asks: QIs it an irresponsible overstatement to associate the treatment of Palestinians with this criminalized Nazi record of collective atrocity? I think notQ.... Fortunately for Hamas, Falk believes international law gives it the Qright of resistance.Q So shortly after the Islamists grabbed control of Gaza in June 2007, he pleaded for the world to Qstart protecting the people of GazaQ from Israel.... Israel is trying to protect itself from Gaza. We unilaterally pulled out our citizens and army from the Strip in 2005. Rather than use our departure to begin building a Palestinian state, Hamas vowed to keep QresistingQ and never accept a Jewish state in the region. Its loathing actually solidified Hamas's popularity among Gazans.... We do not claim that life in Gaza is easy, but so much of its misfortune is self-inflicted. And at a time when the people of Zimbabwe and Congo are experiencing a true Qhumanitarian catastrophe,Q is it not obscene to talk of Gaza in those terms? With nearly a billion people today starving in Asia and Africa, is it not unconscionable to speak of mass famine in Gaza? Prof. Falk: If you want to help the people of Gaza, stop besmirching Israel and start beseeching Hamas to stop shooting and return the Strip to Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority.

13. Human Rights:

Summary:

Contributor Gabi Nudelman wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/11): QAmerica used to be the self-appointed moral guardian of the word.... Today the Qleader of the free world is a pretext waved by all countries that infringe human rights.

Block Quotes:

"AmericaQs Splintered Dream"

Contributor Gabi Nudelman wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/11): America used to be the self-appointed moral guardian of the word.... Its President was able to decide to bomb Sarajevo for months to avoid genocide. Today the Qleader of the free worldQ is a pretext waved by all countries that infringe human rights.... The root of the evil mostly lies with 9/11, but no less with the Bush administration.... Unknown prisoners are jailed in an isolated prison, which turns OrwellQs apocalyptic vision into a childrens tale called the war on terror.

CUNNINGHAM